

Bryn Mawr, PA - The Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, (formerly Akiba Hebrew Academy) founded in 1946, is the oldest pluralistic Jewish secondary day school in North America. Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) congratulated the school on beginning a new chapter Sunday as the academy dedicated its Radnor campus, thanking the school for more than six decades of preparing leaders within the Jewish community. Congressman Sestak gathered with community leaders, elected officials, school benefactors and faculty members, who were present for a special ceremony. —

“I am proud to have been a part of this tremendous event,” said Congressman Sestak. “This institution prides itself on educating students with a commitment to repairing the world, Tikkun Olam, and lovingkindness, Chesed. I know that the Academy will continue this mission and its commitment to producing well-rounded individuals through rigorous secular and religious studies.”

The Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy was re-named after the late brother of Leonard Barrack who, along with his wife Lynne, made a \$5 million endowment to the school in Jack’s honor. Jack was killed at age 27, with father Morris, in a 1960 plane crash. According to the conditions of the gift agreement, 90 percent of the funds will go toward establishing a scholarship program.

“I am taken by the kindness of Len and Lynne Barrack who chose to pay tribute to Jack’s legacy by providing more young people with the opportunity to receive a quality education” said Congressman Sestak. “It is a testament to the Barracks’ selflessness that they would choose this generous act to honor the life of Jack Barrack.”

The school celebrated the dramatic increase in financial aid for its students and showcased its new facilities, including a cutting-edge science center, enhanced technology, and athletic fields, among other features of the Radnor campus. Festivities included a precession and presentation of the Academy’s four Torah scrolls followed by the placement of a mezuzah and a tour.

In his remarks, the Congressman spoke about the importance of education and the fact that schools like the Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy are indispensable to our community and to the country as a whole. The Congressman noted that the Barrack Hebrew Academy—which takes a holistic view to educating its students—has long had a reputation for preparing its students not only academically but also morally and spiritually.

The Congressman further used a commentary (a midrash) on the Torah to describe the wonderful characteristics – including loyalty to both people and community – that the Barrack Hebrew Academy instills in its students. In the story, a businessman from the land of Israel traveling in a foreign country is found guilty of spying and sentenced to execution. He is allowed to return to Israel for 30 days by having a friend take his place in prison with the stipulation that the friend will be hanged if the man does not come back within the 30 day period. When a storm delays the man's return, it appears the friend will be hung; however, the man arrives moments before the hanging. He insists that he is to be punished, not his friend, while the friend argues that it is too late, and to still hang him. The king, hearing the argument, asked to see them and, after listening to them both, allows them to go free under the condition that he can be the "third friend."

"I have long stated that national security begins at home, in the education of our young people" said Congressman Sestak. "Schools like the Barrack Hebrew Academy are an investment in our future because they equip the next generation for the challenges they must confront and help shape students into the leaders who will navigate this country through the extraordinary times ahead."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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